

# Foreign Drum Company Report: Part II

by Bob Saydlowski, Jr.



The 252 *Premier Pedal* features lockable forward spurs, and broad hoop clamps. There's an adjustable footplate which angles for the player's comfort, and double toe stops for a custom fit. This top-of-the-line pedal has a cam action accelerator and a drive shaft mounted on 1/2 inch needle bearings. The *PVC* nylon strap is adjustable for length.

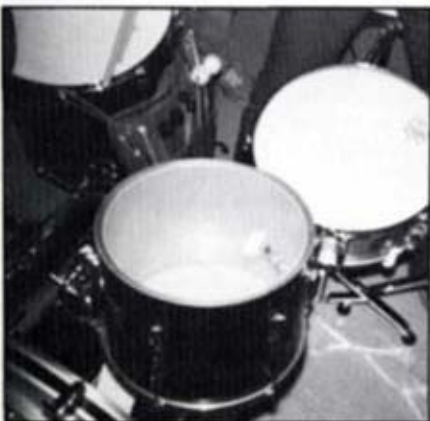
One of Premier's options is the *Rockshaft*, which mounts through the bass drum for added tom-tom stability.

Premier is distributed exclusively in the U.S. by Selmer, P.O. Box 310, Elkhart, Indiana 46515.

## PREMIER

Founded in 1922, the Premier Drum Company has always been known for its products' high standards. From a tiny basement grew three finely equipped factories, a large plating plant, and an office in the West End of London. This growth is testimony to Premier's initiative, and insistence on quality control. Premier drums were widely used in Europe in both popular and symphonic music. They were made popular in the U.S. through various English rock groups.

Let's take a close look at a few features from the Premier line. A unique concept in percussion is Premier's *Resonator* drum outfit. *Resonator* drums have double shells, a conventional outer shell plus a thin inner shell which sandwiches a pocket of air. Air is one of the best sound conductors known to modern technology and acts as a sound box within the instrument. Electronic tests claim 18% greater volume in Premier's *Resonator*.



# PEARL

Until recently, most people have joked about products, "Made In Japan." But, the truth is, the Japanese are coming out with some good products. For the past few years, the Pearl Drum Company has enjoyed a reign of popularity in the United States.

Pearl currently makes four types of shells: wood, fiberglass-lined 9-ply wood, fiberglass, and phenolic, all with different tonal qualities. The fiberglass-lined shells combine the warmth and roundness of wood with the volume and punch of fiberglass. Snare drums are available in either steel or brass shells, and concert toms are made in fiberglass only. Pearl has recently come out with a phenolic shell incorporated into their *Vari-Pitch* drums. Phenolic shells are somewhat of a thick, compressed paper material. The sound has more of a "bite" to it. Actually, Pearl's *Vari-Pitch* drums mate a *Roto-tom* to a phenolic "cannon" (shell). Besides giving more volume than conventional *Roto-toms*, *Vari-Pitch* allows the drummer to balance impact and resonance to get different sounds: wet, dry, high pitch, low pitch. The tom-toms are available in four sizes, all in 10 1/2" depths and no bottom heads. The diameters of the cannons are 2 inches larger than the *Roto-tom* head. The drum is entirely vented. *Vari-Pitch* snare drums are also available in 5" X 14", 6 1/2" X 14", and 10" X 14". All *Vari-Pitch* drums allow the distance to be changed between the head and shell by rotating the *Roto-tom* rim, thus changing the sound.

In the past year, Pearl has critically changed its hardware. They have introduced *Vari-Set*. Similar to Rogers' *Memriloc* system, *Vari-Set* allows the set-



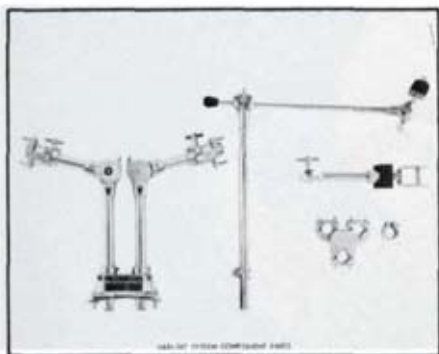
up positions to be locked into place. The drummer sets his kit up once at home, sets the locks, and when set up again, the height and angle will be exactly like the original. *Vari-Set* features include: 1.) Free-moving angle adjustment. 2.) Stem gripping, via indirect pressure. All stands are now equipped with the *Vari-Set* principle, even the cymbal tilters. The best thing about *Vari-Set* is that absolutely nothing will slip after being set. Finally, drum kits can be "roadie-proof!" Adaptors can be added onto the tom-tom arms and stand tubes to hold extra drums and cymbals.

Pearl has beefed up their old 810 bass drum pedal. The new 910 pedal has a larger spring casing enclosing a compression spring, a wider footboard, and a new hoop locking mechanism. The 800 hi-hat

has been changed to the 900 with a wider footboard, double parallel springs, reversible spur-tips, and *Vari-Set* height lock. Both the hi-hat stand and bass drum pedal have sand-blasted finishes. Another boom stand has been added, this one with a shorter arm.

Some new wood finishes have also been added to the present line-up: teakwood, rosewood, and walnut.

Pearl has been an industry leader for a while. They have a reputation of listening to drummers and are always modifying things to come up with the best possible product. A new Pearl catalog has been designed and could possibly have even more changes and developments. No more "Made In Japan" jokes . . . Pearl has changed the story.





# ARBITER

In 1975, Ivor Arbiter was closing a jar of pickles, and developed the "screw-top" principle of drum head tensioning. Thus, in England, Arbiter *Auto-Tune* drums were born.

The main concept behind Arbiter *Auto-Tune* is instant tuning of the drum kit. Instead of pulling the head down like conventional drums, Arbiter drumheads screw down. Each drum has a single lug with a "socket," which, turned with the special ratchet handle, tunes the drum instantly over a two-octave range. In fact, the entire kit is assembled and tuned with one universal ratchet handle. The *Auto-Tune* system allows tuning of all heads when seated behind the kit (even bottom tom heads and front bass drum heads). Because there are no tuning rods connected to lugs, heads can be changed in seconds by "screwing them off like a jar. Bottom heads can be removed instantly for the single-headed sound. There are, however, six tuning rods on each counter-hoop to cope with uneven heads, but in no way do these affect the *Auto-Tune* system. The patented shell design gives 20% more air space, producing a bigger sound. For example, a 16" head on a 16" shell depth is actually a 16" head on an 18" diameter shell. Like metal snare drums, all *Auto-Tune* shells have a reflected bearing edge for increased projection.



Arbiter *Auto-Tune* drums are made in the standard sizes from 8" to 18" toms, 14" X 22" bass drum, and 5" X 14" and 6 1/2" X 14" snare drums. They are distributed in the United Kingdom by CBS/Arbiter who also handle Rogers drums and Paiste cymbals there. All kits are supplied with Rogers hardware, as well as the Rogers *Swiv-O-Matic* double tom holder. A special stand enabling the *Auto-Tune* principle for snare drums screws onto the snare shell. The drums all have fiberglass shells with built-in color instead of a plastic covering. Only three colors are made:

black, white, and gold. The *Original Auto-Tune Five* kit consisting of a 22" bass drum, 12" and 13" toms, 16" floor tom, 5" X 14" snare drum, and all hardware, retails for around \$1400.00, (700 English pounds).

The revolutionary Arbiter *Auto-Tune* drums are not available in the States, but they've been used by many British drummers like Jon Hiseman and Carl Palmer. For literature, write: CBS/Arbiter Ltd.; Fender House; Centenary Estate; Jeffreys Road; Brimsdown, Enfield, Middlesex EN3 7HE, ENGLAND.



# HONDO

Hondo's present offering is limited to a 5 piece set with moderately heavy hardware, however it is their intent to offer sets that can retail this fall for \$299 to \$599. The Hondo Percussion concept is to offer the best in price sensitive, student line percussion equipment. Their advantages are in one of the most highly automated, largest manufacturing complexes in the music industry. Hondo Percussion benefits from a high level of automated technology and a low cost labor advantage. Their labor costs are lower than any other major drum supplier in the world and this savings can be passed along to the final consumer.

Sturdy hardware that's easy to set up and maintain is an important key in their thinking. According to a company spokesman, Hondo will concentrate their efforts in this area, with the goal of having the best low cost, quality hardware available.



Only wood drums are being offered at this time.

For Hondo's price range there is a wide finish selection with black, white, silver metallic, gold metallic, black pearl, white pearl, red sparkle, blue sparkle and silver sparkle.

Hondo Percussion offers drums at price points affordable to the beginner, and is supported by IMC's world wide distribution network. For further information write: P.O. Box 2344, Fort Worth, Texas 76113 U.S.A. or call 817 336-5114.

# STACCATO

Direct from London, England comes this lesser known line in the revolutionary tradition of North Drums, highlighted in the October '77 issue of MD.

Staccato's emphasis is on the horn-shaped constructed shell, a design which seemingly has yet to meet with the complete approval of American or English drummers. This is not to say the unorthodox horn design does not possess certain distinct attributes. The drums do indeed project, which is precisely what they were designed to do. One of the key characteristics of the horn-shape shell is the fact that each drum sounds much larger than its actual size. The smaller heads offer a sharp attack while maintaining a round, mellow tone. And though the toms are quite loud, they're not muddy. Another obvious advantage for drummers in the studio is that the units can be miked directly into the horn itself.

The Staccato toms can achieve a one octave spread between the top and bottom of the horn as though you have two drums in one. All drums are fitted with round nut-boxes, similar in design to the American Camco line. They are completed with triple flange hoops and British style slotted tension rods as opposed to the American square headed variety. Shells are relatively thin, but strong. As a result, the drums are quite light but capable of remarkable volume and projection.

The fiberglass shells are totally hand laminated and also claim to possess total color penetration for easy retouching of shell scratches. Floor Toms are also available in 14" and 16".

Staccato drums are made exclusively for Pro-Drum Products, a division of London's popular Henrit's Drumstore. Inquiries should be directed to Pro-Drum Products, 112/114 Wardour St., London, W1, England.

